

PRESS RELEASE

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CONYERS CALLS FOR FULL DISCLOSURE OF ALL TEXAS-GATE DOCUMENTS BY THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT

Congressman John Conyers, Jr. issued the following statement at today's Judiciary Committee Markup of the resolution regarding the Texas redistricting issue:

"Today we are considering a matter that desperately calls out for this Committee to exercise its oversight over the Department of Justice. The facts we have uncovered to date make out a prima facie case that the Department's law enforcement resources were used for partisan political purposes and that the Department has obstructed our efforts to find out the truth.

FBI agent David Troutman called one of the State Representatives, asking if another representative was present so he could "call our surveillance off." How did the FBI come to be involved in a search for Texas Democrats trying to stop a partisan manipulation of redistricting orchestrated by Tom DeLay?

The answer may have come from DeLay himself. He said that "bringing in..FBI agents was justified" and that a "U.S. Attorney in Texas" was researching it. But the Justice Department won't tell us whether this is true or whether other resources were utilized.

The United States Marshals service was reportedly involved. While one marshal has denied there was any official request for help in what he acknowledges what a "state matter," he – and the Justice Department – have refused to say whether any informal request was made. How did the Marshals service come to be involved in this partisan exercise?

The answer again was provided by Tom DeLay, who said bringing in the U.S. Marshals "was justified." This conduct is troubling by itself. Even more troubling, however, is the stonewalling by the Justice Department.

The Assistant Attorney General has asserted a new and unprecedented privilege to evade Congressional inquiries. He says that he can't tell us who asked the Department to become involved because it would discourage individuals from contacting federal law enforcement agencies about potential violations of federal law.

In other words, if he told us who asked the Justice Department to become involved in partisan politics, that person might be afraid to ask the Justice Department to become involved in partisan politics again.

The Texas Department of Public Safety destroyed documents possibly in violation of federal criminal laws. The Department of Homeland Security asked the FBI to investigate it. The FBI replied that it was "not interested" in investigating it.

Since when is the FBI not interested in obstruction of justice?

According to another report, Tom DeLay bragged to Republican state officials that he killed a voting rights complaint filed with the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice.

The conclusion could not be more clear. It is this Committee's job, not the Justice Department inspector general or anyone else, to oversee the Justice Department and let the chips fall where they may. We should do that whether wrongdoers are Republicans or Democrats.

This resolution asks for information. The American people have a right to that information. The Justice Department shouldn't be allowed to hide it anymore."

